

## Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 06886 241423Z

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ACTION ARA-10

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DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-02 USIA-15 PRS-01 AID-05

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R 231946Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9846

INFO AMCONSUL CALI

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

UNCLAS BOGOTA 6886

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PGOV CO

SUBJ: LOPEZ SPEECH TO CONGRESS, JULY 20

1. ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING OF THE REGULAR SESSION OF CONGRESS ON JULY 20, PRESIDENT LOPEZ DELIVERED A LONG SPEECH, HALF IN THE SENATE CHAMBER AND HALF IN THE HOUSE, IN WHICH HE COMMENTED ON COLOMBIA'S FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC AFFAIRS AND DEFENDED HIS ADMINISTRATION'S POLICIES. THE SPEECH, DELIVERED, AS USUAL, IN A DEADPAN MONOTONE, WAS RECEIVED WITHOUT REACTION BY THE CONGRESS AND PROPTED LITTLE SPONTANEOUS APPLAUSE.

2. LOPEZ MAJOR POINTS DEALING WITH INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS ARE TREATED IN SEPARATE CABLES: THE LOS AND COLOMBIAN TERRITORIAL WATERS (BOGOTA 6853), THE COLOMBO-VENEZUELAN TERRITORIAL WATERS DISPUTE (BOGOTA 6851), THE PANAMA-COLOMBIA CANAL AGREEMENT (BOGOTA 6850), AND US-COLOMBIAN RELATIONS AND HIS STATE VISIT (BOGOTA 6821).

3. TURNING TO CUBA, LOPEZ SAID IT WAS ONLY REASONABLE FOR HIM, A LIBERAL, TO CONTINUE THE POLICY OF THE PREVIOUS CONSERVATIVE PRESIDENT OF OPENING UP TOWARD CASTRO'S GOVERNMENT IN THE CURRENT ATMOSPHERE OF THAW. EVEN THE  
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 BOGOTA 06886 241423Z

US, HE SAID, HAS ALLOWED ITS TRANSNATIONAL COMPANIES

TO DO BUSINESS WITH CUBA. UNDER THE SAME PRINCIPLE OF UNIVERSALIZATION IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS (FREQUENTLY REFERRED TO AS IDEOLOGICAL PLURALISM), LOPEZ EXPRESSED PLEASURE OVER THE NORMALIZATION OF RELATING WITH CHILE.

4. TURNING TO DOMESTIC MATTERS, LOPEZ SAID THAT COLOMBIA'S "EXPERIMENT" IN DEMOCRACY IS WORKING. CITING NOT SO CONVINCING INDICATORS, HE CLAIMED THAT THE ECONOMY IS HEALTHIER THAN IN OTHER COUNTRIES OF SIMILAR SIZE AND CONDITIONS. REMINDING HIS AUDIENCE OF HIS "CLEAR MANDATE" AT THE POLLS, HE PAINTED HIMSELF AS A LIBERAL DEMOCRAT OPEN TO COOPERATION WITH ALL POLITICAL FACTIONS AND FAITHFULLY GUARDING CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS FOR FRIENDS AND ADVERSARIES ALIKE. FURTHERMORE, HE MAINTAINED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT ENJOYS PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN ITS WORD BECAUSE OF PROMISES KEPT, LIKE THOSE OF SIGNING A CONCORDAT DRAWN UP UNDER PRESIDENT PASTRANA AND STANDING BY THE COMMITMENT TO PLACE A CONSERVATIVE IN THE CONTROLLER'S CHAIR DESPITE OBJECTIONS FROM HIS OWN PARTY.

5. LOPEZ EMPHASIZED THAT THE RECENT IMPOSITION OF THE STATE OF SIEGE WAS NOT A POLITICAL MOVE TO SILENCE CRITICS BUT ONE TO "PROTECT CIVIL RIGHTS AND SOCIAL GUARANTEES" IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF RISING CRIME AND DISORDER. FURTHERMORE, IT WAS IMPOSED ONLY AFTER A SHOW OF GREAT GOVERNMENT TOLERANCE IN THE FACE OF PUBLIC DISTURBANCES, SOME OF WHICH, HE ADMITTED, MAY HAVE HAD JUSTIFIABLE CAUSES BASED UPON SOCIAL NEEDS. THE ECONOMIC EMERGENCY PROVISION WAS INVOKED LAST YEAR, HE SAID, TO ENABLE THE GOVERNMENT TO MEET PRESSING FINANCIAL NEEDS, AND THE ACTION HAD THE EFFECT OF PUTTING THE "HOUSE IN ORDER". THE PRESIDENT SAID HE WAS PLEASED TO NOTE THAT LABOR CONFLICTS HAD BEEN SOLVED WITHOUT PRESSURES FROM THE GOVERNMENT, ILLUSTRATING A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY AMONG COLOMBIANS. TOUCHING ON FUTURE GOVERNMENT ACTION, HE SAID THAT CONGRESS WILL DISCUSS PROPOSED LEGISLATION CONCERNING REORGANIZATION OF METROPOLITAN AREAS AND NORMS GOVERNING PLANNING; HE WILL PROPOSE HARSHER PUNISHMENT FOR CERTAIN SERIOUS CRIMES; AND HIS GOVERNMENT WILL PURSUE ITS ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM PROGRAM, FOCUSING ON REDUCING CORRUPTION AND IMPROVING THE ADMINISTRATION OF PORTS.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 BOGOTA 06886 241423Z

6. LOPEZ EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM ABOUT THE EXISTENCE OF LARGE PETROLEUM RESERVES TYRAT COULD BE BROUGHT ON STREAM IF ONLY PETROLEUM PRICES WERE RAISED. HE ADMITTED THAT COSTS OF EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN COLOMBIA WERE HIGH AND THAT TO ATTRACT EXPLORATION, A DECENT RETURN WAS NECESSARY. HOWEVER THIS REQUIRED ECONOMIC STUDIES AND NOT SIMPLY ARBITRARY PRICE INCREASES. THE PRESIDENT

REGRETFULLY ADMITTED THAT THE PETROLEUM REFINERARY PROJECT IN TUMACO WOULD BE DELAYED AND PERHAPS DISCONTINUED BECUASE OF UNEXPECTEDLY SMALL RESERVES IN PUTUAMYO. THE GREATEST HOPE TO TUMACO AND COLOMBIA, HE SAID, WOULD BE LARGE PETROLEUM DISCOVERIES IN YARI, AN AREA TO BE EXPLORED BY ECOPETROL AND PETROBRAS. LOPEZ POINTED OUT THAT AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT ROSE BY THREE PERCENT DURING THE LAST YEAR AND WHEAT IMPORTS WOULD DECLINE BY 100 THOUSAND TONS. HE HINTED AT A NEW AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM WHICH WOULD INCLUDE THE CLOSING OF LEAGL LOOPHOLES BY WHICH LARGE LANDHOLDERS HAVE AVOIDED EXPROPRIATION. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT EXPORT PERFORMANCE WAS BETTER THAN IN THE SIXTIES AND THAT IN THE FUTURE THE ADMINISTRATION WILL SUPPORT LABOR INTENSIVE NON-TRADITIONAL EXPORTS THROUGH CREDIT, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND TRANSPORT POLICIES. IN A TONE OF OPTIMISM, LOPEZ EXPLAINED THAT THE FIRST MONTHS OF HIS ADMINISTRATION WERE DEDICATED TO ECONOMIC STABILIZATION, THEN ADDED THAT THE SUCCESS OF HIS PROGRAM WILL NOW ENABLE HIM TO ANNOUNCE (PROBABLY IN HIS COMING AUG 7 SPEECH) A DEVELOPMENT PLAN COVERING A VARIETY OF SECTORS.

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